



Ukraine war may lead to rethinking of U.S. defense of Europe

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine and his push to upend the broader security order in Europe may lead to a historic shift in American thinking about defense of the continent. Depending on how far Putin goes, this could mean a buildup of U.S. military power in Europe not seen since the Cold War.

The prospect of a bigger U.S. military footprint in Europe is a remarkable turnaround from just two years ago.

In 2020, President Donald Trump ordered thousands of American troops out of Germany as part of his argument that Europeans were undeserving allies. Just days after taking office, President Joe Biden stopped the withdrawal

before it could start, and his administration has stressed NATO's importance even as Biden identifies China as the main long-term threat to U.S. security.

Then came Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"We are in a new era of sustained confrontation with Russia," says Alexander Vershbow, a former U.S. ambassador to Russia and former deputy secretary-general of NATO. He argues that the United States, in cooperation with NATO allies, will need to establish a more muscular stance to deal with a more threatening Russia. That is especially so in Eastern Europe, where Russia's proximity poses a problem for the three Baltic nations that are former Soviet states.

Continued on next page



An old so called 'raisin bomber' airplane from WW II is seen at the airlift memorial at the airport in Frankfurt, Germany, on June 24, 2020.

Associated Press

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Continued from Front

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was flying to Europe on Tuesday for his second recent round of Ukraine consultations at NATO headquarters in Brussels. He also will travel to two Eastern European NATO countries — Slovakia, which borders Ukraine, and Bulgaria, which does not. After a NATO meeting last month, Austin visited two other allies on the eastern flank — Poland and Lithuania.

As Austin was en route, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg made it clear Tuesday that the 30-nation military alliance is set to radically change its security stance in Europe in response to Russia's war on Ukraine. He said defense ministers will discuss possible changes when they meet Wednesday.

"We need to reset our mili-



Pentagon spokesman John Kirby speaks during a briefing at the Pentagon in Washington, on Feb. 2, 2022.

Associated Press

tary posture for this new reality," Stoltenberg told reporters. "On land, this could include substantially more forces in the eastern part of the alliance, at higher readiness, and with more prepositioned equipment." He added that NATO "will also consider major increases to our air and naval

deployments, strengthening our integrated air and missile defense, reinforcing our cyber defenses, and holding more and larger exercises."

In just the past two months, the U.S. presence in Europe has jumped from about 80,000 troops to about 100,000, which is nearly as

many as were there in 1997 when the United States and its NATO allies began an expansion of the alliance that Putin says threatens Russia and must be reversed. By comparison, in 1991, the year the Soviet Union dissolved, the United States had 305,000 troops in Europe, including 224,000 in Germany alone, according to Pentagon records. The number then dropped steadily, reaching 101,000 in 2005 and about 64,000 as recently as 2020.

This year's U.S. troop additions are billed as temporary, but there's no certainty how long they'll stay. They include an armored brigade of the 1st Infantry Division, totaling about 4,000 soldiers, to Germany, and a similar-size infantry brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, to Poland. Numerous Army headquarters units also have been sent to Poland and Germany. Austin also sent F-35A fighter jets to NATO's eastern flank and Apache attack helicopters to the Baltic states.

A recent Pentagon review of its worldwide military presence concluded that troop levels and positions in Europe were about right. But in testimony before a House committee several days after Putin invaded Ukraine, Mara Karlin, a senior Pentagon official who oversaw the 2021 review, said that conclusion will have to be reconsidered. The Pentagon must "ensure that we've got deterrence of Russia and that we can absolutely 150% say that NATO is safe and secure," not just in light of Russia's invasion but for the longer term, she said March 1.

Putin's war in Ukraine has prompted a rethinking of regional defense needs not just by Washington but also some European allies, including Germany, which last month broke with a longstanding policy of

not exporting weapons to conflict zones by sending anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to Ukraine. Germany also committed to a much bigger defense budget.

"A new reality," Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared.

Putin has not only demanded that Ukraine disavow its ambition to join NATO but also insisted the alliance withdraw its forces from NATO's eastern flank — demands the U.S. and NATO reject as counter to the fundamental rights of nations to decide their foreign relations for themselves and of NATO's basic commitment to provide security for all members equally.

If Russia were to take control of the entirety of Ukraine, it would be on the border of additional NATO countries, including Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. Poland and Lithuania already share a land border with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, headquarters of the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Navy.

There is concern that Putin could decide to make a play for control of that 60-mile-long land corridor, known as the Suwalki Gap, that connects Kaliningrad to Belarus.

Vershbow, the former deputy NATO secretary-general who is now a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council, recommends that the U.S. and NATO move beyond their current reliance on light, battalion-size battle groups in Eastern Europe to instead deploy heavier, larger and permanent forces there.

Such a transition on NATO's eastern flank is just the sort of thing Putin says is a threat to Russia and says he will no longer tolerate. He has demanded a return to the arrangements that existed in 1997, when the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed. □



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Watchdog has concerns with projects at U.S. nuclear repository

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) —

There's no way of knowing if cost increases and missed construction deadlines will continue at the only U.S. underground nuclear waste repository, according to independent federal investigators, according to results of a federal watchdog report made public Tuesday.

The Government Accountability Office outlined the concerns in its report, noting that the U.S. Energy Department is not required to develop a corrective action plan for addressing the root causes of challenges at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in southern New Mexico.

A multimillion-dollar project is underway at the underground facility to install a new ventilation system so that full operations can resume, following a radiation leak in 2014 forced the repository's closure for nearly three years.

Operations after it reopened had to be throttled back because parts of the facility were contaminated and airflow was reduced.

Federal officials have said that the construction project will ensure that the repository can meet the Energy Department's needs for disposing of tons of Cold War-era waste left behind by decades of bomb making and nuclear research. But the Government Accountability Office report stated that the Energy Department faces construction and regulatory risks that might delay its plans.

According to Energy Department documents, the ventilation project as of last fall was projected to cost about \$486 million, nearly 70% more than originally planned. The project also is about three years behind schedule, with a new estimated completion date of January 2026.

The Energy Department had blamed significant cost overruns and delays on the contractor's inexperience and difficulties in attracting workers to the



This March 6, 2014 file photo shows the idled Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, the nation's only underground nuclear waste repository, near Carlsbad, N.M.

Associated Press

area, an expansive desert that is also home to one of the most productive oil fields in the world.

While some corrective measures were taken, department officials told the Government Accountability Office that they have not updated an internal system that is meant to track risks and mitigation measures.

Without the updates, Energy Department officials may not be able to meet their waste disposal schedule, "which could in turn create shipping delays and cost increases for the sites that are generating the waste," the accountability office's report said.

The report reiterated that the repository is running out of permitted space for waste and that the Energy Department has a large amount of "transuranic waste" — which typically consists of lab coats, rubber gloves, tools and debris contaminated with plutonium and other radioactive elements — at sites around the country that still requires disposal.

The repository was carved out of an ancient salt formation about a half-mile (0.8 kilometer) below the surface, with the idea that the shifting salt would eventually entomb the radioactive waste.

Its current footprint includes eight panels, which the Energy Department estimates

will be filled in 2025. There are plans for two new pan-

els in the short term, but the report noted that it's unclear whether the new space will be ready in time to prevent an interruption of disposal operations.

New Mexico regulators also have yet approve permit changes and other requests from the Energy Department, and it's unclear how long that will take.

Department officials in a response to the report agreed with the recommendations aimed at addressing the root causes of the cost increases and construction delays to ensure "that DOE projects benefit taxpayers while reducing the risk to human health and the environment."

Nuclear watchdog groups have been critical of the Energy Department. □

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Haitians aiming for Florida Keys outpace 2021 migration

By **DANICA COTO** and **FREIDA FRISARO**

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP)

— Haitian migrants are reaching Florida's shores in large numbers as human smuggling operations ramp up, outpacing last year's migration waves.

The rise in the desperate and sometimes deadly voyages on overloaded vessels comes amid deepening political instability, skyrocketing inflation, severe fuel shortages and a spike in gang-related violence and kidnappings in Haiti.

About 140 Haitian migrants came ashore Monday on Summerland Key, about 20 miles (30 kilometers) up the highway from Key West, and Monroe County Sheriff's deputies joined federal agents in processing them.

Earlier this month, a wooden boat carrying hundreds of migrants grounded in shallow water off Key Largo, and 163 people swam ashore near the Ocean Reef Club. Many needed medical treatment, federal officials said.

Another boat carrying 176 Haitians was stopped in January just off the Florida Keys, the U.S. Coast Guard said. The Coast Guard routinely returns people interdicted at sea to their country of origin. Those arriving in the U.S. generally are taken



This photo provided by Monroe County Sheriff's Office, Haitian migrants arrive on shore at Summerland Key, Fla., on Monday, March 14, 2022.

Associated Press

into custody and face deportation unless they have viable asylum claims.

The United Nations Security Council reported in mid-February that gangs in Haiti have been growing more powerful and seizing more territory, with an under-resourced and understaffed police force struggling to contain them.

"The actions of these armed criminal groups have had a catastrophic impact on the economy of Haiti and threaten the fundamental

rights of all Haitian citizens, especially their rights to life, freedom of movement, work, health care and education," the U.N. report concluded.

Kidnappings in the country of more than 11 million people have increased by 180% and homicides by 17% in the past year, with more than 500 people alone killed between September and December, including 40 women and children as young as 5 years old, according to the report.

In addition, instances of civil unrest jumped by more than 80% as a growing number of Haitians sink deeper into poverty, with inflation reaching the double digits.

Also, many Haitians who have lived overseas for many years in South American countries have been seeking entry via the southern land border into the United States, which sent an estimated 18,000 back to Haiti in recent months.

Another 10,000 Haitians

have been deported from neighboring Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola, in recent months in a crack-down on migrants. Once back, many of the former expatriates have added to Haiti's unemployment crisis. U.S. Customs and Border Protection is taking the lead in the investigation into the most recent case in the Florida Keys.

The Coast Guard has stopped other Haitian boats navigating near the Bahamas with dozens of migrants. On Sunday, the agency transferred 127 Haitians and three Cuban nationals to Bahamian authorities after picking them up in two locations near Anguilla Cay, Bahamas.

So far this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1, Coast Guard crews have encountered 1,193 Haitians at sea. That compares with 1,527 Haitian migrants in all of fiscal year 2021, 418 in 2020 and 932 in 2019, the Coast Guard said.

On Feb. 28, crews spotted a Haitian sailboat with 179 people aboard 30 miles (50 kilometers) off Andros Island, Bahamas. Last Friday, the Coast Guard stopped another Haitian sail vessel with 123 people, including 39 minors, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) from Anguilla Cay, Bahamas. □

Feds once again nix Noem's Mount Rushmore fireworks event



Fireworks burst at Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Friday, July 3, 2020, near Keystone, S.D.

Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The National Park Service has denied South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's request to

mark the Fourth of July with fireworks at Mount Rushmore, citing opposition from Native American

tribes as well as the possibility of igniting wildfires.

"Mount Rushmore is the best place in America to celebrate our nation's birthday — I just wish President Biden could see that," the Republican governor said in a statement Tuesday. "Last year, the President hypocritically held a fireworks celebration in Washington, D.C., while denying us our own event. This year, it looks like they are planning to do the same."

Noem said she would continue a court battle to hold the fireworks. She filed a federal lawsuit against the Biden administration after it refused to issue a permit for a similar celebration

last year. A federal judge rejected her arguments in June, prompting an appeal to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis.

In a letter dated Monday from the U.S. Department of Interior, Mount Rushmore National Memorial Superintendent Michelle Wheatley said a fireworks event would not be "safe and responsible." Noem successfully pushed for a return of the event in 2020 after a decadelong hiatus. It gave former President Donald Trump an opportunity to be featured at a patriotic display attended by thousands of people during the coronavirus pandemic.

In the letter to the South

Dakota Department of Tourism, Wheatley noted the March 2021 wildfire that closed the memorial for three days.

"Current drought conditions and the 2022 wildfire outlook indicate that fireworks would cause a high likelihood of a wildfire ignition," she wrote.

Local Native American tribes objected to the celebration being held on land they hold as sacred.

"There is ample documented opposition for the Tribes to the 2020 event, and we understand from ongoing meetings with the Tribes that these concerns have not diminished," the letter stated. □

EU hits Russia with more sanctions: From trade to truffles

By **RAF CASERT**
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Pure-bred horses, truffles, a soccer club owner and a media company chief.

They were among the targets of new European Union sanctions against Russia on Tuesday that sought to deny oligarchs their love of luxury and rob the nation of lucrative steel exports.

The 27-nation bloc sought to stay away from sanctions that would sap its supply of Russian energy, but pounced with measures worth billions while stifling its ability to work on global markets by banning EU rating agencies to work with Russian clients.

"These new sanctions will cut Russia off even further and drain its resources to finance this barbaric war. So one can say that the Russia has become the most sanctioned nation in the world, which is very dubious honor indeed," European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis said.

The continued punishment of Moscow for its invasion of neighboring Ukraine was done in close consultation with Western allies, from the United Kingdom to the



The Ukrainian flag flaps in the wind atop the Atomium landmark during a fundraising event for Ukraine in Brussels, Thursday, March 10, 2022.

Associated Press

United States.

Together they agreed to deny Russia the status of most favored nation, which will cost its companies privileged status in Western economies. Britain announced sanctions against 350 individuals and entities Tuesday and also promised to ban the export of luxury goods to Russia.

The European Union has already hit about 600 Russians during the four sanction sessions, including 15 individuals and nine entities in the fourth package of sanctions. It affected one oligarch already targeted by Britain — Chel-

sea soccer club owner Roman Abramovich, who was slapped with an asset freeze and a travel ban.

The EU's official journal said that Abramovich "has had privileged access to the (Russian) president, and has maintained very good relations with him. This connection with the Russian leader helped him to maintain his considerable wealth."

Tuesday's list of 15 individuals also included Konstantin Lvovich Ernst, the chief executive of Russia's state-run Channel One, which the EU says is used by Russian President Vladimir Putin for propaganda purposes.

It didn't work on Monday, when Marina Ovsyannikova, a Channel One employee, walked into the studio during Monday's evening news show with a poster saying "no war" and "Russians against the war." The EU announcements were in line with what leaders had announced at the Versailles summit last Friday — that a stringent package of sanctions would be upcoming if Russia continued its invasion of Ukraine.

And the EU insisted that the measures had already had their impact.

"We see that ruble has crashed. Trading on the

Moscow Stock Exchange remains suspended. Russia's credit rating has been downgraded to junk status just about default levels. Many international companies are leaving the country," Dombrovskis said.

The import ban on steel products would amount to some 3.3 billion euros (\$3.6 billion) in lost exports for Russia, as the EU was its No. 1 market.

This time special attention was paid to the elite by targeting luxury goods. It ranged from truffles, Champagne, cigars and perfumes to fine wines, rare wristwatches, pearls and diamonds.

"We're trying to target the wealthy, elite oligarchs," an EU official involved in the setting up of sanctions said on customary condition of anonymity.

Since the war started last month, the EU has adopted tough measures targeting Putin, Russia's financial system and its high-maintenance oligarchs. Last week, the bloc's nations agreed to slap further sanctions on 160 individuals and added new restrictions on the export of maritime navigation and radio communication technology. □

Germany to disarm far-right extremists, restricts gun access

By **FRANK JORDANS**
Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany's top security officials announced a 10-point plan Tuesday to combat far-right extremism in the country that includes disarming about 1,500 suspected extremists and tightening background checks for those wanting to acquire guns.

Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said the far right poses the biggest extremist threat to democracy in Germany and said authorities would seek to tackle the issue through prevention and tough measures.

"We want to destroy far-right extremist networks," Faeser told reporters in Berlin, saying this included targeting financial flows

that benefit such groups, including merchandising businesses, music festivals and martial arts events.

Authorities will work to remove gun licenses from suspected extremists, crack down on incitement spread online through social networks and combat conspiracy theories online. Faeser said an emphasis will also be put on rooting out extremists who work in government agencies, including the security forces. Reports about far-right extremists among the police and military in Germany have raised particular concerns because of fears that they could use privileged information to target political enemies.

Parliament's commissioner for the military, Eva Hoegl,

said separately Tuesday that there were 252 "reportable events" among German troops in 2021, an increase compared to previous years that she attributed to heightened sensitivity surrounding extremism in the ranks. She called for swifter court martial proceedings so that soldiers found to have broken the law or breached conduct rules can be fired faster.

Thomas Haldenwang, the head of Germany's BfV domestic intelligence service, said his agency planned to release a report in the coming months about extremists who work for the authorities.

The agency is also monitoring the Alternative for Germany political party after a court ruled last week that



Nancy Faeser, Federal Minister of the Interior and Home Affairs, speaks at a press conference to present the Action Plan on Right-Wing Extremism in Berlin, Germany, Tuesday, March 15, 2022.

Associated Press

it can designate the party as a suspected case of extremism, he said.

Haldenwang said authorities have recorded a small number of far-right extrem-

ists traveling to Ukraine as foreign fighters, but most of the chatter online by people saying they planned to do so appeared to be "swagger." □

'Harrowing figures': Yemen report says 161K to face famine

By **SAMY MAGDY**

CAIRO (AP) — More than a dozen U.N. agencies and international aid groups said Monday that 161,000 people in war-torn Yemen are likely to experience famine over the second half of 2022 — a fivefold increase from the current figure.

The stark warning came in a report by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, ahead of an annual fund-raising conference that the United Nations is hosting on Wednesday. The IPC is a global partnership of 15 U.N. agencies and humanitarian organizations working in Yemen and funded by the European Union, the USAID and UKAID. It tracks and measures food insecurity in conflict-stricken regions.

The report underscores the dire situation in the poorest Arab nation that plunged into civil war for in 2014, when Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels took control of the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north, forcing the government to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia.

A Saudi-led coalition entered the war in March 2015, backed at the time by the U.S., in an effort to restore the internationally



A malnourished boy Maher Ahmed is placed on a scale at a feeding center at Al-Sabeen hospital in Sanaa, Yemen, Nov. 3, 2020.

Associated Press

recognized government to power. The war has deteriorated largely into a stalemate and caused one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

"These harrowing figures confirm that we are on a countdown to catastrophe in Yemen and we are almost out of time to avoid it," said David Beasley, head of the World Food Program,

appealing for immediate funding to "avert imminent disaster and save millions." The IPC report says 19 million people in Yemen — out of a population of more than 30 million — are likely to be unable to meet their minimum food needs between June and December, up from 17.4 million.

Also, 2.2 million children, including 538,000 already

severely malnourished, and about 1.3 million women, could be acutely malnourished by the end of the year, the report said.

"More and more children are going to bed hungry in Yemen," said Catherine Russell, UNICEF's executive director. "This puts them at increased risk of physical and cognitive impairment, and even death."

The report stressed the war in Yemen is the main driver of hunger and the crisis is likely to deteriorate due to the war in Ukraine. Yemen depends almost entirely on food imports, with 30% of its wheat imports coming from Ukraine, the U.N. agencies said.

"Peace is required to end the decline, but we can make progress now. The parties to the conflict should lift all restrictions on trade and investment for non-sanctioned commodities," said David Gressly, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Yemen.

Separately, Farhan Haq, the U.N. deputy spokesman, said funding shortages have forced aid programs to scale down or close altogether in Yemen. He said food aid for 8 million has been drastically cut back and in the coming weeks, nearly 4 million people could lose access to clean water and sanitation, he said.

Haq described the upcoming fund-raiser as "an opportunity to demonstrate that the world has not forgotten Yemen, even as other crises are demanding global attention" and called on donors to "pledge generously and to disburse funds quickly." □

India court upholds ban on hijab in schools and colleges



Indian Muslim students wearing burqas leave Mahatma Gandhi Memorial college after they were denied entry into the campus in Udupi, Karnataka state, India, Feb. 24, 2022.

Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — An Indian court Tuesday upheld a ban on wearing hijab in class in the southern state of Karnataka, saying the Muslim headscarf is not an

essential religious practice of Islam in a ruling that is likely to further deepen religious tensions in the country.

The high court in Karnataka

state delivered the verdict after considering petitions filed by Muslim students challenging a government ban on hijabs that some schools and colleges have implemented in the last two months. The ban does not extend to other Indian states, but the court ruling could set a precedent for the rest of the country.

The dispute began in January when a government-run school in Karnataka's Udupi district barred students wearing hijabs from entering classrooms, triggering protests by Muslims who said they were being deprived of their fundamental rights to education and religion. That led to counterprotests by Hindu students wearing saffron

shawls, a color closely associated with that religion and favored by Hindu nationalists.

More schools in the state followed with similar bans and the state's top court disallowed students from wearing hijab and any religious clothing pending a verdict.

The court in its ruling said the state government had the power to prescribe uniform guidelines for students as a "reasonable restriction on fundamental rights."

The ruling came at a time when violence and hate speech against Muslims have increased under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governing Hindu nationalist party, which also governs Karnataka state.

Over the last few weeks, the issue has become a flashpoint for the battle over the rights of Muslims, who fear they are being shunted aside as a minority in India and see hijab bans as a worrying escalation of Hindu nationalism under Modi's government.

Some rights activists have voiced concerns that the ban could increase Islamophobia.

"No one can understand our anxiousness about what is to follow," Afreen Fatima, a New Delhi-based student activist, wrote on Twitter. "The court's Hijab ban is a great injustice and a very worrying precedence. The scale of its repercussion is going to be brutal and inhuman." □

Puerto Rico exits bankruptcy after grueling debt negotiation

By DÁNICA COTO

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— Puerto Rico's government formally exited bankruptcy Tuesday, completing the largest public debt restructuring in U.S. history after announcing nearly seven years ago that it was unable to pay its more than \$70 billion debt.

The exit means that the U.S. Caribbean territory's government will resume billion-dollar payments to bondholders for the first time in several years, settle some \$1 billion worth of claims filed by residents and local businesses and issue more than \$10 billion worth of bonds. The government also will restore up to \$1.3 billion taken from a public pension system.

"This is a significant success," said Natalie Jaresko, executive director of the federal control board that oversees Puerto Rico's finances and its debt restructuring process. "Remaining in bankruptcy has been a drag on the economy in multiple ways."

The bankruptcy led to widely criticized austerity measures on an island that paid some \$1 billion in fees to consultants and lawyers and in other expenses during the process.

The exit was a priority for the board and Jaresko, who previously announced she is retiring April 1. A replacement has not been named yet. The board is expected to remain in place until Puerto Rico has four consecutive balanced



In this July 29, 2015 file photo, the Puerto Rican flag flies in front of Puerto Rico's Capitol as in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

budgets, a feat that has yet to be achieved.

The debt restructuring plan was approved by a federal judge in January. It reduces claims against Puerto Rico's government from \$33 billion to just over \$7.4 billion, with 7 cents of every taxpayer dollar going to debt service, compared with 25 cents previously.

"This is a transcendental moment," said Gov. Pedro Pierluisi. "The plan is not perfect ... but it has a lot of good things."

The board has clashed several times with Pierluisi and previous administrations, particularly on a proposal to reduce certain monthly pension benefits that was ultimately scrapped.

The plan also creates a public pension reserve trust that will be funded with more than \$10 billion in upcoming years.

"For decades, past governments have neglected to put aside enough money," Jaresko said.

While many celebrated Puerto Rico's exit from bankruptcy, Jaresko said it is unlikely the island will be able to access financial markets soon because it has yet to get its audited financial statements up to date.

Puerto Rico accumulated more than \$70 billion in public debt and more than \$50 billion in public pension liabilities through decades of corruption, mismanage-

ment and excessive borrowing. The U.S. Congress created the federal board in 2016, a year after the island's government said it was unable to pay its debt. In 2017, Puerto Rico's government filed for the largest municipal bankruptcy in U.S. history. Months later, Hurricane Maria struck, raz-

ing the island's power grid and causing billions of dollars in damage.

The island is still trying to recover from the hurricane as well as a series of powerful earthquakes that struck its southern region starting in late 2019. The coronavirus pandemic also has been a serious setback.

Still unresolved are the bankruptcy proceedings for the \$5.8 billion in debt held by Puerto Rico's Highways and Transportation Authority and the Electric Power Company, which owes \$9 billion, the largest debt of any government agency.

In early March, Puerto Rico's governor announced he was canceling a debt restructuring deal for the power company, saying that worsening inflation, surging oil prices and other factors had changed significantly since the deal was negotiated with creditors in 2019.

Jaresko said the board expects to soon renew negotiations, mediation and discussion with all those who bought bonds issued by the power company. □

Associated Press

Red-orange Sahara dust coats Spain, makes it hard to breathe

By JOSEPH WILSON

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP)

— Hot air from the Sahara Desert has swirled over the Mediterranean Sea and coated Spain with red-orange dust, prompting authorities to issue extremely bad air quality warnings Tuesday for Madrid and a large swath of the country. The national air quality index listed the capital and large parts of the southeast

coast as "extremely unfavorable" — its worst rating. Spain's weather service described the dust storm from the Sahara as "extraordinary and very intense," while adding that it was unclear if it was the worst episode of its kind on record. Spain's weather service forecast that the dust will continue to accumulate through Wednesday and could reach as far north as the Netherlands and north-

western Germany. On Tuesday, the dust storm spilled over into neighboring Portugal.

Many Spaniards awoke to find a layer of red-orange dust covering their terraces, streets and cars. The sky in the capital and other cities had a gritty tinge. Visibility in Madrid and cities like Granada and Leon was reduced to 2.5 miles (four kilometers), the weather service said. □

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Competition in celebration of 'Aruba Flag Day' at Barracudas Artistic Swimming Aruba

ORANJESTAD - To celebrate Aruba Flag Day, the sport of Artistic Swimming will hold their competition on Saturday the 19th of March at the Olympic Swimming Pool Roly Bislik in Savaneta.

During the morning portion of the day they will have the technical part where the beginners who recently started the sport will showcase what they learned and try to pass to the next level. After, the technical portion for the category of 12 to 13-15 year olds. During the afternoon portion of



the day will be the official opening at 5:30pm with a

runway of all athletes that are a part of Barracudas Artistic Swimming with a routine on music. All of Aruba is heartily welcomed to come and appreciate this beautiful sport.

Who are we?

Barracudas artistic Swimming Aruba introduced since 1973 to the community of Aruba the beautiful sport of Synchronized Swimming. In 2017 the name was changed to Artistic Swimming. The main goal of the club is to give athletes the opportunity to develop



and prepare themselves in the sport for international competitions. Recently the sport was opened to male athletes to participate seeing how the sport development internationally. Barracudas Artistic Swimming Aruba is the only Artistic Swimming club in

Aruba and is affiliated to Aruba Aquatics Federation who is a member of F.I.N.A. For more information or to simply connect with us, you can visit our facebook page @barracudas.aruba or our website www.barracudasaruba.com.

The Bulldog Aruba Open, warm and relaxed

PALM BEACH – A combination of a cocktail bar, a restaurant and a gift shop on a tropical island, now that is something you need to try! We invite you to The Bulldog Aruba! The most recent addition to the world famous 'Livingroom of Amsterdam' by the Bulldog family. Located in the center of Paseo Herencia Mall in Palm Beach.

The Bulldog Aruba seats up to 110 people and provides guests with a refined selection of cocktails, smoothies and fine dining. With regular Karaoke Nights, live performances



by bands and DJs, it is a relaxed place to go out and meet new people. Just like in Amsterdam, The Bulldog Aruba allows guests to taste the typical Bulldog atmosphere: inviting, pleasant and relaxed. An atmosphere that fits seamlessly with the Caribbean way of life. Without a doubt, this is 'The Livingroom of Aruba'.

The history of The Bulldog goes back to 1975 when founder Henk de Vries took over his father's shop in Amsterdam's famous Red Light District and turned this place into the world's very first coffee shop. Today, The Bulldog is an international company with multiple locations in Barcelona, Rome, Ibiza, Silver Star (Canada BC) and, of course, home base Amsterdam.

St. Patrick's Day and Aruba Flag Day!

Celebrate these special days at The Bulldog Aruba. On St. Patrick's Day we will have all night long Lucky Shots at a special price. Have some fun singing at our Karaoke Contest or playing at the Beerpong Tournament. For Aruba Flag Day we will have a special on Magic Mango and Magic Orange where the buckets for both Magic Mango and Magic Orange will be \$20 until Aruba Flag Day. And as they say, a full belly makes a happy heart, so take a look at their fabu-



lous menu. Try their newest additions to their menu, the loaded fries, you won't be disappointed.

Walk-ins are always welcome, but reservations are highly recommended at +297 563-7951 or send an email to orsine.wanga@thebulldog.com

Roses are red, Violets are blue, Vodka is cheaper than dinner for two!

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The taste of New England with Caribbean flair

ORANJESTAD — One thing is for certain: Chef Scott Scheuerman and his team are famous for getting people hooked, just like the fish on your plate. You will get the taste of home fused with Caribbean while dining in elegance. Scheuerman will tell how Aqua Grill established its name since opening in 2002, and why it reaped accolades from such prestigious travel publications as Fodor's, who says, "This hip restaurant is heaven on earth for seafood lovers, who will find fresh fish galore..." Now is your chance to taste Aqua Grill's NEW seasonal menu and create a lifetime culinary memory.

'A Scheuer thing'

Secretly, we all know that the success of a restaurant begins in the kitchen. That is where the chef creates his magic and for Aqua Grill the culinary team has won an assortment of awards for their continuous delivery of 'haute-cuisine del mar.' Classic seafood is mingled with contemporary ideas resulting in surprising dishes that soon made the restaurant a must-dine, confirmed by established travel media specialists like Fodor's and Frommer's. American-born Scheuerman, executive chef of Aqua Grill, is thrilled about 'his restaurant'.

"We started out as a New England style seafood restaurant, patterned after Boston style. But we quickly blended into some Caribbean, local flair... if you will. We do still offer the traditional New England dishes like whole Maine lobster, northern seafood plates like the salmon, tuna and swordfish. We buy also from the local fisherman to offer Caribbean dishes like snapper and grouper which are number one sellers in our restaurant being the most prevalent local fishes. Catches like wahoo, mahi mahi and brasil are welcome too, anything that comes out of the water we embrace."

Fresh import from Boston

Aqua Grill flies in their own shipments on a weekly basis mostly from Boston because the price quality balance is the best, says the chef. "We are unique in this. Number one priority is buying fresh, we mean not frozen. Our original concept is New England seafood and we stick to that concept. They have a wonderful assortment of oysters and lobsters as well." Aqua Grill also offers international fusion type of menu items; actually all you wish for is there. A very balanced menu awaits you. "And we have options for meat lovers



and vegetarians/vegans too. We, however, do not mix it up too much because we believe we do not want to lose our identity as a seafood restaurant," Scheuerman adds.

Sublime menu

Now is the time to indulge in Aqua Grill's dinner experience. The established restaurant offers a sensational menu. We present to you a Raw Bar with among others fresh Oysters on the half Shell, Littleneck Clams, Peruvian Ceviche and Lobster Salad. Steamed Dumplings and Prawns or Steamed Mussels seduce you from the open view kitchen.

After that continue your gastronomic trip to heaven with the house specialties like Main Lobster, steamed or broiled or maybe you crave for the best Alaska King Crab Legs you have ever tasted?

You haven't reached your destination yet because there are more main course options to blow you away: Seared Chilean Sea Bass, Cioppino or Blackened Tuba are just some to mention.

Take a pick out of Aqua Grill's delicious desserts to finally conclude yes, this beats it all. We will be back for more. □

Aqua Grill

J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 374

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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Aruba Ancestral Island

Episode CXLV - 145

Our ultimate goal is to create cultural awareness, promote education, and safeguard our heritage as a sacred seed for renewal, revival and reinvention, guiding our readers to become new guardians of these ancient lands.

The ancestral characteristic of the territory is having right to the land, as collective property enjoyed by the native communities who, in Aruba, are descendants of ancient farmers from the tropical forests of South America, Arawak-speaking people who reached the continental coastal areas and then populated the islands of the Caribbean Sea. Evolving in to highly organized athonumouse nations which where very prosperous and completely sutainable.

Aruba's legendary Caquetio tribe where the people who signed an early treaty with the Spanish crown.

Their indigenous territories covered an geographical area demarked by permanent sacred, social, economic and cultural bouderies inclosing the habitat for and for the peoples activities. Farming corn, beans, squash, yucca, peanuts, tropical vegetables, fruits, cotton. Exploiting the riches of the mangrove forests and the great viriaty of fruits of the sea.

Must imagine that Aruba's landscape was covered with a great amount of flora and general conditions were much more favorable than today. The landscape and topography of the island in many areas offered perfect layouts that formed zones where people could walk for hours under Arubas mequite forest canopy, trees that blocked sunlight. Although a small island, there were open grasslands or savannahs covered with cacti and xerophytes, while other areas were made wetlands and salt pans.

A rough estimate of 72% of what remained of a forest covering Oranjestad in the 17th century (starting in the Cumaná area, near the airport, extending up Ponton Hill) were large and ancient Kwihi trees (Prosopis Juliflora) with diameters of 4 to 6 feet of which not a visible trace has been left for the next generetions, as a green



approach is not considered by revenue seekers

For the indigenous people, the territory is the embryo that gave rise to the existence of their cultures, morality and their righth to own their identity.

For the indigenous the relationship with his territory is extremey essential and vitalfor their existance as a cumunity. Today the responsability falls on those hiers of these original inhabitants, to raise awareness of these unfathomable resources that could be lost forever. These indigenous arubans are those who are advocating for a cure for the world and empower by legislating recognition and protection to those desending of the old ones, guardians of our ecosystem and endangered heritage for the

next generations to come.

The value of indigenous peoples rights is in their knowledge since this play a fundamental role in environmental management and development, due to their traditional way and existential practices. Reasons why States must recognize and support their identity, culture and interests which with no doud ficiitate and suppotr sustainable development at its core. So benefits in preserving the island's culture are enormous andcritical to keeping Aruba's history alive. This is essential for the construction of identity, collective memories and the mindset of belonging to the natural world.

To conserve this native culture heritage, it is necessary to create a registry that contains the relationship of the different peoples existing in Aruba and implement dissemination strategies to make the society aware of the customs morality of the people.

If you love Aruba its origins and its cultural heritage, be part of the exclusive visitors of this cozy home-atelier called "Etnia Nativa". This private residential houses collections of native art, archaeological artifacts and historic furniture, while the facilities themselves are the result of the transformation of recycled materials.

Meet the acclaimed columnist at home! Book your visit Whatsapp + 297 592 2702- or mail: etnianativa03@gmail.com.☐



Millennial Money: 3 steps to breaking unhealthy money habits

By **LAUREN SCHWAHN** of **NerdWallet**

Some bad habits affect our physical health, like smoking, nail biting or eating too much junk food. But others take a toll on our financial health.

How do you know if you have unhealthy financial habits, and what can you do to build better ones? Take these three steps.

1. DIG INTO YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY

Relationships with money are complex. It isn't always easy to identify financially unhealthy behavior. But there are some signs you can look for. Common problem areas include spending more money than you earn, neglecting to start an emergency fund and not saving for retirement.

Taking a financial health quiz can be a good first step toward detecting weak spots. However, our struggles don't always reflect poor habits or decision-making. Many experts say it's important to consider the role that systemic issues can play in shaping financial health.

"Not being able to get a living wage, not having medical insurance, having student loans in a career that you can't find a job. The fact that there's nowhere in this country that someone who is living on minimum wage can rent a two-bedroom apartment. Those are all systemic issues," says Sandra Davis, founder of Sage Financial Solutions, a San Francisco Bay Area-based organization focused on providing financial services for low-wealth communities.



In this June 15, 2018 file photo, twenty dollar bills are counted in North Andover, Mass.

Associated Press

If you're dealing with these kinds of systemic problems, focus on finding support. United Way's 211 service can connect you with resources if you're struggling to pay bills or afford basic needs.

On the other hand, if your income should be enough to cover your expenses but doesn't, that's when you should look at your behavior, Davis says. What choices are you regularly making, and what do you have the power to control?

Look for patterns. Maybe you shop online when you're bored or upset. Or you ignore your debt because it's overwhelming. Maybe you tend to spend windfalls instead of using the money intentionally because your family didn't emphasize the importance of saving growing up.

Emotions and experiences can have a major impact

on our money habits. That's why it's also possible to develop unhealthy habits if you're in good financial shape. For example, a person who pays all their bills on time and has plenty of savings might still feel anxiety around spending or argue about money with a partner. "Often there's that history of financial scarcity and loss somewhere in their background that's unresolved that leads them to not be able to fully connect with the fact that they're actually financially secure now," says Ed Coombs, a certified financial planner and financial therapist in Charlotte, North Carolina. Once you better understand what's behind your unhealthy habits, you can begin to repair them.

2. SET PERSONAL GOALS

Ask yourself, "Where are you trying to go? And where are you right now? And

then how do you bridge that gap?" Davis says.

Setting financial goals can put you on the path toward healthier habits. Your goals can revolve around specific dollar amounts, such as becoming debt-free or saving three months' worth of expenses in an emergency fund, Davis says. Or, the goal might be about changing your money mindset, such as becoming more thoughtful about your spending or getting comfortable discussing money with others.

Create a plan that supports your vision of financial health. Say you want to boost your emergency savings or make credit card payments on time. Automating those transactions can help. You can transfer a specific amount from your checking account to savings each month or set up minimum credit card

payments through your issuer's website.

Coombs suggests checking in on your finances once a month or every couple of months. Review your budget and behavior to determine whether you're on track to reach your goals.

3. LEAN ON RESOURCES

Breaking financial habits can be challenging. But you don't have to do it on your own. There are people and activities you can turn to, "whether it's journaling or having a conversation with your partner or some other mode of helping yourself feel safe again around the topic of money," Coombs says. There are also many professionals who can offer guidance. A financial therapist, for example, can help you unpack your money relationships.

"All of us have a money history. And if your money history is one where there's a lot of emotional pain and chaos connected with money, then oftentimes those issues in your past need to be treated much like any other type of trauma," Coombs says.

You may also choose to work with a financial planner or seek free advice on managing your budget, credit or debt from a non-profit credit counseling agency.

Along your journey to improving your financial habits, learn to advocate for yourself, Davis says. "What that can do is reduce or eliminate shame, about going to get help wherever you might need it. If that means public benefits, if that means family and friends, whatever that means to you," she says. □

Cameron Smith making it harder to be overlooked

By **DOUG FERGUSON**

AP Golf Writer

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla.

(AP) — The scoring was so low at Kapalua that it was easy to overlook the name in the record book.

The play was so bold, bordering on fearless, at the TPC Sawgrass that Cameron Smith was impossible to ignore.

Those two victories, different in so many ways, are a big reason Smith is No. 6 in the world. He has a comfortable lead over Rory McIlroy and Justin Thomas behind him in the ranking and is closing in on Scottie Scheffler and Patrick Cantlay ahead of him. Never mind that he doesn't resemble golf's elite.

Smith hits short and crooked off the tee, which has never been a good combination in any era of golf. True, he makes up for it with his short game, particularly his putting. That much was evident Monday at The Players Championship when he one-putted eight of the last nine greens.

That carried him to a record-tying 10 birdies in the final round and a 6-under 66, giving him a one-shot victory in the biggest golf tournament this side of a major. But there is more to the 28-year-old Australian that can't be measured by numbers. And it's not his mullet, which for the

longest time was getting more attention than his golf.

For Smith, it's all about the fight and the willingness to take on any shot.

He is the product of a working-class family in Brisbane. He was asked to describe the Aussie meaning of toughness, particularly the Queenslanders. □

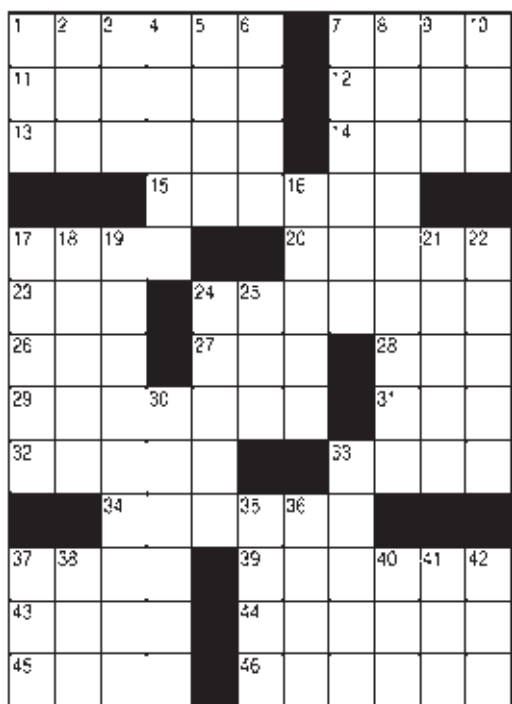
CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 45 Cocoon, for example
 - 7 Singer Tori
 - 11 Maine national park
 - 12 Mall come-on
 - 13 Lease signer
 - 14 Hearty entree
 - 15 Magical
 - 17 Track count
 - 20 Theater worker
 - 23 In the style of
 - 24 Somber
 - 26 Hoop attachment
 - 27 Chiding sound
 - 28 Football's Marino
 - 29 Hour announcers, perhaps
 - 31 Employ
 - 32 Hawke of Hollywood
 - 33 Gush
 - 34 Come into view
 - 37 Alan of "M*A*S*H"
 - 39 Showy flowers
 - 43 Inner being
 - 44 "Raging Bull" star
- DOWN**
- 1 Touch lightly
 - 2 Road hazard
 - 3 Sprinted
 - 4 Second president
 - 5 Minute
 - 6 Puts away
 - 7 Help out
 - 8 Partnered
 - 9 Flamenco cheer
 - 10 Attach a patch
 - 16 Elephant pair
 - 17 Joust need
 - 18 Alaskan native
 - 19 Fixed, in a way
 - 21 Make blank
 - 22 Make fresh
 - 24 Make amends
 - 25 GI-enter-taining org.
 - 30 Joe's veep
 - 33 Paris sight
 - 35 Frees (of)
 - 36 Got larger
 - 37 Nile serpent
 - 38 Singer Rawls
 - 40 Comic Caesar
 - 41 Before, in poems
 - 42 Heir, often



Yesterday's answer



A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-16 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

P NO BSZ ZFR NMDFRZWYNA
ARNKPBUNONB. ZFPX PX ONPBAW
ISM SBR MRNXSB: NX WSE ONW
FNLR BSZPDRK, P FNLR BS
FNPM. — YNZMPDJ XZRHNMZ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: UNFORTUNATELY FOR MY FAMILY, THEY HAVE A WRITER IN THE FAMILY. — ISABELLE ALLENDE

U.S. astronaut to ride Russian spacecraft home during tensions



In this Aug. 17, 2021 photo made available by NASA, astronaut and Expedition 65 Flight Engineer Mark Vande Hei inspects a spacesuit in preparation for a spacewalk at the International Space Station.

Associated Press

By MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer
CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — U.S. astronaut Mark Vande Hei has made it through nearly a year in space, but faces what could be his trickiest assignment yet: riding a Russian capsule back to Earth in the midst of deepening tensions between the countries.

NASA insists Vande Hei's homecoming plans at the end of the month remain unchanged, even as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has resulted in canceled launches, broken contracts and an escalating war of words by the Russian Space Agency's hardline leader. Many worry Dmitry Rogozin is putting decades of a peaceful off-the-planet partnership at risk, most notably at the International Space Station.

Vande Hei — who on Tuesday breaks the U.S. single spaceflight record of 340 days — is due to leave with two Russians aboard a Soyuz capsule for a touchdown in Kazakhstan on March 30. The astronaut will have logged 355 days in space by then, setting a

new U.S. record. The world record of 438 continuous days in space belongs to Russia.

Retired NASA astronaut

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Scott Kelly, America's record-holder until Tuesday, is among those sparring with Rogozin, a longtime ally of Vladimir Putin. Enraged by what's going on in Ukraine, Kelly has returned his Russian medal for space exploration to the Russian Embassy in Washington. Despite the deadly conflict down here, Kelly believes the two sides "can hold it together" up in space. □



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WK 7 and 14 - all views

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H.E.R. does juggling act with concert tours, acting, Grammys

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. LOS ANGELES (AP) — H.E.R. won top Oscar and Grammy music honors last year, but those supreme accolades were just a precursor for the singer-songwriter's next moves.

The R&B star enters the Grammy Awards as one of the leading nominees again, she's the new global ambassador for L'Oreal Paris, she was recently honored at Billboard's Women in Music event and she will start filming "The Color Purple" musical this month in Georgia. She'll embark on her 19-city Back of My Mind tour in early April while separately joining Coldplay for their world tour as a supporting act later this month. Plus, H.E.R. is still fitting in studio time to record new music. It might seem like a super heavy workload, but the singer says she's willing to carry the weight.

"I do take up a lot of space. I do carry a lot with me. I'm supposed to," said H.E.R., whose protest anthem "I Can't Breathe" won a Grammy for song of the year in 2021. In the same year, she took home best original song for the soulful "Fight for You" from the "Judas and the Black Messiah" soundtrack at the Academy Awards. She co-wrote both songs.

"In the beginning, I wanted to be about the music and not necessarily who I am and what I look like," she continued. "I'm a musi-



H.E.R. appears at the 63rd annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on March 14, 2021.

Associated Press

cian before anything. Now I'm just organically showing myself and speaking on certain things and just being me. I want people to feel my presence — whether it's in the music industry or the world."

H.E.R.'s upcoming tours and Grammys offer that platform. She'll perform for the first-time in her career in a stadium when she makes her first appearance on Coldplay's tour on March 25 in Monterrey, Mexico. Other touring cities with huge stadiums include Paris, Los Angeles, London, Dallas and Frankfurt, Ger-

many.

The four-time Grammy winner said she found inspiration to perform in stadiums — where she "wants the drums to really hit" — after watching Kanye West and Drake's benefit concert at the LA Memorial Coliseum late last year.

"It inspired me to go into rehearsal and just fine tune everything and come up with some really great arrangements and make it an experience," she said. "The sound is different in an arena and even in a theater than in a stadium. I want to make sure I fill the space.

That's the challenge, but also the fun part."

H.E.R. kicks off her tour in Los Angeles on April 5, just two days after the Grammys, where she's up for eight nominations including album and song of the year. Both tours will run in conjunction with each other, but she says the stadium shows with Coldplay are "really spread out" location and date wise while her tour touches some of those same domestic cities and other markets too.

H.E.R. said the tour will be an opportunity to show her evolution as a music maker

and woman.

"It's the growth of me as a musician, but also just as a person," she said. "I think that's special. It's a special thing for me and I hope that people join me and continue to be on the on the ride with me."

After working with H.E.R., producer Hit-Boy said he's looking forward to the singer's tour and other projects calling her a "different breed."

"She's an entertainer and musician," said Hit-Boy, who produced "Trauma," a song on H.E.R.'s debut studio album "Back of My Mind," a Grammy album of the year nominee. "She separates herself from a lot of others as a musician. She understands when you play her certain chords and exactly what they are, what exactly to put on top of them."

Along with touring, H.E.R. will venture into the world of film for the Oprah Winfrey-produced "The Color Purple" musical — a project she says will give "people something they haven't seen from me." It'll be her acting debut alongside a starry cast that includes Fantasia, Colman Domingo, Taraji P. Henson, Danielle Brooks and Halle Bailey. H.E.R. called being the global ambassador for L'Oreal an honor. She said she's been using the platform to empower young girls and women of color just like the singer, who is Filipino and Black. □

Anna Deavere Smith among winners of arts academy prizes



Actor-writer Anna Deavere Smith attends a special screening of HBO Films' "Notes From The Field" in New York on Feb. 21, 2018.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Actor-playwright-educator Anna Deavere Smith, playwright Adrienne Kennedy and author-essayist Philip Lopate are among this year's recipients of career achievement prizes from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Lopate, 78, won the \$100,000 Christopher Lightfoot Walker Award for contributions to American literature. His books include the essay collections "Bachelorhood" and "Against Joie de Vivre" and the novels "Confessions of

Summer" and "The Rug Merchant." He has also edited such anthologies as "Writing New York" and "The Art of the Personal Essay."

The academy announced Tuesday that the 90-year-old Kennedy, known for such plays as "Funnyhouse of a Negro" and "Sleep Deprivation Drama," won its Gold Medal for Drama. Smith, 71, whose credits range from such one-person stage shows as "Fires in the Mirror" to the TV series "The West Wing" and "Nurse Jackie," has been given

the Medal for Spoken Language. Also on Tuesday, the academy gave the Distinguished Service to the Arts award to Edwin Frank, the 61-year-old poet, essayist and founder of the publishing imprint New York Review Books, which releases everything from overlooked literature of the past to contemporary books in translation. The 52-year-old visual artist Kara Walker, whose silhouettes have been exhibited worldwide, received a Gold Medal for Graphic Art. □

Cameron Smith making it harder to be overlooked

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla.

(AP) — The scoring was so low at Kapalua that it was easy to overlook the name in the record book.

The play was so bold, bordering on fearless, at the TPC Sawgrass that Cameron Smith was impossible to ignore.

Those two victories, different in so many ways, are a big reason Smith is No. 6 in the world. He has a comfortable lead over Rory McIlroy and Justin Thomas behind him in the ranking and is closing in on Scottie Scheffler and Patrick Cantlay ahead of him.

Never mind that he doesn't resemble golf's elite.

Smith hits short and crooked off the tee, which has never been a good combination in any era of golf. True, he makes up for it with his short game, particularly his putting. That much was evident Monday at The Players Championship when he one-putted eight of the last nine greens.

That carried him to a record-tying 10 birdies in the final round and a 6-under 66, giving him a one-shot victory in the biggest golf tournament this side of a major.

But there is more to the 28-year-old Australian that can't be measured by numbers. And it's not his mullet, which for the longest time was getting more attention than his golf.

For Smith, it's all about the fight and the willingness to take on any shot.

He is the product of a working-class family in Brisbane. He was asked to describe



Cameron Smith, of Australia, holds the trophy after winning The Players Championship golf tournament Monday, March 14, 2022, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

the Aussie meaning of toughness, particularly the Queenslanders.

"It's probably just never give up," Smith said. "I grew up watching rugby league and watching the Queenslanders come from behind. And even when it got gritty, they'd somehow manage to win. I think that's kind of instilled in all of us." It was like that at the start of the year. Smith set the PGA Tour record to par when he won the Sentry Tournament of Champions at Kapalua at 34 under. More than the score, he had to go toe-to-toe with Jon Rahm, a power player from Spain and the No. 1 player in the world.

Rahm closed within one shot with seven holes to play, and Smith matched him shot-for-shot the rest of the way on a Plantation course built for power.

The Players Championship was even more hectic, minus the record scoring. There were 17 players separated by three shots at one point in the middle of the round. There was trouble everywhere, even in the best conditions of the week.

Smith had only one thought, and that was to be aggressive to the very end. He started by rolling in a 40-foot birdie putt, the first of four in a row that helped take him from a two-shot deficit to a two-shot lead. And then he couldn't hit it where he was aiming, leading to three straight bogeys. It was like that all day. Smith had one par through 13 holes.

"And lots of good grinding at the end," he said. What stands out is the finish, even if it was partly by accident.

Already the most recognizable hole in America, the par-3 17th hole and its island green take on new meaning in the final round of the richest tournament in the world, a \$20 million purse with \$3.6 million going to the winner.

Smith led by two shots and stared across the water to an island, the hole 135 yards away cut in the back right portion of the green. There is about 12 feet between the flag and the water, and Smith's 9-iron landed somewhere between that space.

On purpose? The smile would suggest otherwise. "I was probably aiming 10 feet left of that," he said. "But still wanted to stay aggressive, still wanted to make birdie." That he did, holing a 4-foot putt for a three-shot lead. Equally scary is the tee shot

on the 18th, with water all the way down the left side. Smith didn't hesitate. Out came the driver to get down the fairway as far as he could. From the trees, he tried to punch out and caught it more cleanly off the pine needles than he expected, the ball scooting across the short grass and into the water.

And then a big cheer: Anirban Lahiri had birdied the 17th behind him. The lead was down to two shots and the margin for error was shrinking. Smith was 60 yards away playing his fourth shot on the closing par 4. And he never flinched.

His lob wedge danced around the cup and settled 3 feet away for bogey.

"You have to tip your cap at Cam, who played phenomenal golf," said Paul Casey, who played alongside in this wild ride. "He won this tournament." That's the joy Smith gets out of golf.

It doesn't always work out in his favor. Bold shots he didn't pull off cost him a chance to win a World Golf Championship and a FedEx Cup playoff event last year. But that's the thrill of it, and he gets it right enough times to be among the best in the world.

"My expectations are I wake up, go to the gym, practice as hard as I can for a couple hours, and then go and have a good time. That's it basically every day," Smith said. "My expectation is to prepare well and then kind of let everything fall into place from there." There is a lot of fight without too much stress. □

Brent Sass wins his 1st Iditarod sled dog race across Alaska

By MARK THIESSEN

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP)

— Musher Brent Sass won the arduous Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race across Alaska on Tuesday as his team of 11 dogs dashed off the Bering Sea ice through a crowd of fans in downtown Nome.

Sass mushed down Front

Street and across the finish line just before 6 a.m.

"It's awesome, it's a dream come true," Sass said with his beard and mustache partially encrusted in ice during the post-race interview before he was presented a prize-winning check of \$50,000.

It's the first Iditarod win for

Sass, a wilderness guide and kennel owner who was running in his seventh Iditarod. His previous best finish was third last year.

This is the 50th running of the race, which started in 1973. This year's event began with 49 mushers, and five have dropped out along the trail. □



Iditarod winner Brent Sass poses for photos with lead dogs Morrello, left, and Slater in the finish chute of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Nome, Alaska, Tuesday March 15, 2022.

Associated Press

MLB players ponder how Manfred can mend icy relationship

By JAKE SEINER

VENICE, Fla. (AP) — Rob Manfred made a startling admission while announcing the end of baseball's bitter labor battle last week: He's failed in his role as a diplomat to players. The acknowledgement was stunning enough that famously polite Atlanta Braves starter Charlie Morton nearly laughed when told about it. "The commissioner said that?" Morton asked. Indeed, he did. And it prompts a thornier question: What can Manfred do to prove he's sincere about mending this rancorous marriage?

"One of the things that I'm supposed to do is promote a good relationship with our players," Manfred said Thursday, after the end of baseball's 99-day lockout. "I've tried to do that. I think that I have not been successful in that."

It's perhaps the one point on which Manfred and players agree.

"To just put it bluntly, he doesn't do anything for us," St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Adam Wainwright said. "I know how that's going to read, so Commissioner Manfred, don't take it personal. That's just how it looks from a players' standpoint." It may be hard for fans scarred by labor strife to remember, but player relations was once Manfred's specialty. He was elected commissioner by Major League Baseball's 30 owners in 2014 partly because of his record of maintaining labor peace over more than a decade as the league's lead negotiator. Cracks quickly emerged in that foundation. The sport's collective bargaining agreement negotiated in 2016 prompted a slowdown in free agency. A mysterious change to the



Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred leaves after speaking at a news conference, Thursday March 10, 2022, in New York.

baseballs spurred a spike in home runs. Astros players evaded punishment after stealing signs en route to a 2017 World Series title, and in defending his investigation, Manfred referred to the championship trophy as a "piece of metal." He apologized days later.

A clash over the terms of the pandemic-shortened 2020 season fully fractured the relationship. A work stoppage became inevitable, and the sides agreed to end this winter's lockout just in time to preserve a 162-game regular season. Players have some ideas on where Manfred can improve — starting with the way he speaks publicly, especially about the game. "Maybe just all the comments and stuff," Tampa Bay Rays pitcher Tyler Glasnow offered. "I'd say there was a lot of anger towards, like, the 'piece of metal.' There are small things like that."

"I don't think the Lombardi

Trophy is a joke to anyone, or whatever they call the NBA trophy, or the Stanley Cup," Rays outfielder Kevin Kiermaier said. "That's not a joke to those guys. I don't hear their commissioners saying stuff like that."

Just two weeks ago, Manfred riled up players and fans by joking and laughing with reporters at a news conference to announce the cancellation of opening day due to the lockout. "We didn't get a deal done two weeks ago, and he's like kind of laughing or smiling," Kiermaier said. "I didn't think anything was funny or comical about what happened."

"I think for me it's just more positivity toward the game and players, and that's really it," said New York Yankees reliever Zack Britton, a member of the players' association's executive sub-committee.

Some players were encouraged by Manfred's admission, which accompanied

vow to prioritize strengthening the bond between management and players. Manfred said he'd use small steps to begin the healing process, which began with a phone call to union leader Tony Clark shortly after a deal was reached Thursday. A day later, Clark said he "responded accordingly and suggested to him that there's a lot of work to do moving forward with respect to where our game is at and where it needs to head."

"For him to come out and say something like that is definitely encouraging," Rays outfielder Austin Meadows said of Manfred's acknowledgement. "I think transparency for both sides, whether it's union, owners, Manfred, I think that that's going to be a big step going forward."

Several players even expressed sympathy for Manfred's position. The commissioner is expected to present himself as a steward of the game, but Manfred's actual job is to represent the interests of 30 owners.

"In fairness to him, being commissioner, he's got to make sure he watches out for those guys," Wainwright said.

There's an understanding that nobody always says

the right thing.

"Some of the things he said, I think he probably regrets that, I would think," Kiermaier said. "But I'm also sitting here feeling like I'm talking, walking on eggshells, right? That I'll say something I don't want to."

And even an appreciation that in the end, the lockout ended in time to preserve a full season.

"It's his job to go ahead and get a deal done," Braves reliever Tyler Matzek said. "A deal got done. We didn't miss any games, so you kind of tip your cap to him."

"I do think his job is probably very hard," Glasnow said. "It's hard to put yourself in those shoes."

Morton echoed that sentiment. A former union team representative who has played for five clubs entering his 15th season, Morton noted that friction was inevitable amid the complicated dynamic between players, their union, Manfred and team owners.

He sees the latter as potentially pivotal to healing the sport's wounds. Morton has been with teams where owners are highly involved and readily available. He's also been on clubs where the boss is rarely seen. Face time between owners and players makes a difference. "It can normalize that relationship, right?" Morton said. "And then that leads to dialogue, hopefully productive dialogue, and you don't have these situations." The 38-year-old Morton was encouraged by Manfred's confession. He hopes there's a connection there to salvage. But he sees enough of the larger picture — what he calls "a very dynamic relationship" with many sides — to believe there's a straightforward solution.

"If he feels that way, I mean, the idea that someone wants to be more communicative and open and have a better relationship with people, I don't see how that how that's a negative thing," Morton said. "But at the same time, I know it's tough. So, I don't know." □



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